**An Exercise in Analyzing and Evaluating Movies**

**Overview:** This exercise is intended to warm you up for the complex task of writing a critical analysis. We can all summarize a plot and give an opinion, but analysis & evaluation are harder.

**The stories we will focus on:**

1. [**Quai de Seine**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLL4ogfxvss)A veiled woman explains
2. [**Faubourg Saint-Denis**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPd4SOfHb-A)When love is literally blind.
3. [**Bastille**](https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=you+tube+paris+je+t%27aime&ei=UTF-8&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-002)A straying husband “rises to the occasion”
4. [**14th Arrondisement**](https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=you+tube+paris+je+t%27aime&ei=UTF-8&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-002) An American in Paris practices her French.

**Content/Structure:** All film reviews do two (sometimes all) of these three things: 1) **summarize** the film’s subject and some of the plot, 2) **provide background** about the film’s topic, director, actors, genesis of the project 3) **evaluate** the film based on whatever criteria the reviewer judges to be the most relevant to the audience’s expectations and the film’s particular merits or weaknesses.

**Directions:** In your mini-review, **you will focus on** **evaluation**. Aim for at least one handwritten page, skipping lines and providing reasonable margins. **Pick at least two of the criteria** below to support your judgment of your short film. **You will write this in class today.**

**Criteria:** Separating the merely personal response from the genuinely arguable judgment can be a great challenge when criticizing a public art form such as a movie. One way to minimize the difficulty is to be very clear about criteria. Sometimes the writer has to make a case for particular priorities, maybe the message over the acting, or vice versa. For the purposes of this assignment, let’s consider some fairly standard criteria.

* **The story** (plot): Engaging? Interesting structurally? Plausible (if realism is the aim)?
* **Message:** Did it provide food for thought without being overly didactic (preachy)?
* **Complexity/clarity:** Did the film explore a theme in a pleasingly complex way, without being vague or confusing? Or did the film develop the themes with a pleasing simplicity without being simplistic?
* **The acting:** Assuming the aim was a naturalistic style, was the acting convincing? If the style isn’t naturalistic, was it appropriate to the genre and meaning of the film?
* **Visual qualities:** Without getting too technical, did the film *look* good, meaning, did the composition of each frame support the meaning and mood of the story? Did the camera angles, lighting, setting, costume, and special effects (if any) contribute to the overall effect of the story or detract from it? Were there any particular shots that stood out to you, either as especially effective or ineffective?
* **Creativity:** Did the film do anything unusual, such as omit dialogue entirely, or tell the story in voice-over, or withhold a bit of information that changes your view of things dramatically at the end? Do the creative touches support the meaning of the film or were they distracting? Note: creativity might overlap with visual qualities.